

1: Burrows--115
116, 283, 565, 461

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Rope-making is work for mature man; just why is not certain. There may be more than one factor involved. For one, the preparation of fiber, which is women's work, is laborious. This limits the supply, and the seniority of the older men may give them first claim to what there is. Another possibility is that this slow, steady work may appeal more to middle-aged men than to the more vigorous, comparatively restless youngsters. Still a third factor may be the ascription of a certain dignity to rope twisting, which makes it a more appropriate occupation for grave and reverend seniors than for upstart youths. Such an association between the manufacture of sennit cordage and high status has been established in Samoa. Tø Rangi Hiroa (Samoa Material Culture, p. 248) calls it 'a chiefly custom' there and adds: 'The status of the occupation was recognized by terming the braiding materials a chief's staff.' (The fact that the technique there is braiding rather than twisting seems irrelevant.) In Ifalik the connection is at most less explicit. If rank is indeed attributed to the occupation, it is the rank of all mature males, whether chiefs or commoners."

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"Division of labor by age is less systematic and extensive than that by sex. Most of it can be brought under two heads: one, reserving difficult and responsible tasks to those old enough to be trusted with them; the other, relieving those past their physical prime from the more strenuous and dangerous jobs. An example of the first is that only grown women use up much of the scarce banana fiber in weaving; of the second, that elderly men are not expected to climb coconut trees, whether for young drinking nuts or for toddy."

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Woleaian
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"Division of labor by rank is minimal. If a chief chose to refrain from manual labor, it is my impression that he would be considered within his rights. But the only chiefs who did so in 1947-8--Wolpetau and Paliuilimar--would have been justified by age even if they had been commoners. Maroligar, not very old but afflicted with some pelvic trouble that made his gait a hobble, and gave him painful days after physical exertion, also refrained from heavy work to some extent. But at light tasks he was the most industrious man of our neighborhood, if not of the whole atoll. He took charge of Katēlū, site of the men's house, the former men's house, a canoe-house and two stone piers; and worked daily at removing brush and rubbish, planting little tufts of sod, and similar park-keeping; even, at the risk of pain, piled coral blocks to repair the [116] seaward end of one of the piers, which had been battered by a typhoon. Wolpaitlk, youngest of the chiefs and burly--even fat, a rarity on Ifalik--threw his bulk into whatever hard work was going on. Toromann, though slight and getting along in years, was a skilful adzeman, and almost as industrious as Maroligar. He was one of the steadiest workers on Tom's canoe. He also suggested and carried out, partly with his own hands, several improvements in our camping setup."

"The incentives that put men to work and keep them at it in Ifalik are quite different from the wages and profits on which we rely. A man goes to work there because of some felt obligation. In the long run, he will be repaid by the results of work others do for him. But the connection between his effort and its eventual reward may be remote. In the case of work done for his household it is clear enough. His housemates share the results of his efforts, and he shares the results of theirs. There is nearly as direct a connection when he works with others on some public project, whose benefits all will enjoy. When he helps build a canoe for another man, the kind of reward he may expect is more complicated. He will be partly fed while on the job. That is only part payment. The rest of it is roundabout, and indefinitely postponed. Sooner or later, he will want help, whether for a canoe of his own or to meet some other need. When that time comes, help, including the services of the man for whom he built the canoe or his family, will be forthcoming on the same terms as the labor he provided. In the long run, everybody comes out even. The people of Ifalik seem to understand quite well how the system works. A few examples will help make it clear to one accustomed to our economic system."

"In the making of Tom's canoe, the obligations that brought men to the work were of three kinds: (1) kinship; (2) neighborliness; (3) friendship. On the big days, when many hands were needed, all the neighbors rallied round. Most of the workmen seemed to be from FalārIk, where Tom lived and where the work was going on; but there were some from Fauau, and Tom said proudly that some men, not relatives of his, came all the way from Falālap just out of friendship.

Sociability might be added as an additional motive with all hands. On those particular days, that job and the assemblage it brought together probably afforded the best entertainment to be found on the island. And on some of these days there was still another inducement, sometimes held out in our culture in the one word 'refreshments' on notices or invitations. Women of Tom's two households cooked and brought food for the workers.

For the long pull--the many days when only a few workers stayed on the job--the obligation that brought most of them was kinship. The steadiest workers were: (1) Magaleisei, Tom's brother, to whom he had delegated supervision of the work while he was on duty with the visiting anthropologists; (2) the chief Toromann, whose wife is Tom's sister (my records do not make clear whether she is [119] what we would call a sister, or whether Tom used the word in an extended sense, in which case she is what we would call a cousin); (3) Aueligar, Toromann's son, whom Tom would call vatuwei (my sister's son); (4) Siuman, another sister's son; (5) Auilimar, husband of one of

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116, 396, 461, 602, 476

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Tom's sisters; (6) Tom's two grown sons, one his own, the other adopted. The elder, his own son, was rather sulky and uncooperative toward him. (Analysis of this strained father-son relationship falls in Spiro's field.)

Three of these man [sic]--Magaleisei, Toromann, Auilimar--were considered master-shipwrights. Aueligar, an intelligent and energetic young man, is probably on his way to that distinction. In that case, beside meeting his obligation toward his mother's brother, the job would count toward finishing his apprenticeship.

The motivation in this case was not always strong enough to keep a crew of men on the job; perhaps because of the unusual circumstance that Tom himself was absent so much of the time, working for us, and hence could not inspire the other workers with his own enthusiasm. On October 2, he asked the chiefs to issue an order for more men to work on his canoe. The word spread rapidly, and within about an hour a number of men appeared, and got on with the job of fitting and fastening the planks of the hull. But on October 5 there was a public task--replacing the corner post in a canoe house--that took all available manpower. On the day after that, only Toromann and two other elderly men were at work on the canoe.

October 15 Tom announced angrily to the chiefs that he was not going to work for us on the following day. He was going to work on his canoe. Nobody had been at work on it for several days, he said; and if he spent all his time working for us, it never would be finished. This episode will be considered in detail in the chapter on government.

1: Burows--118-119
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Ifalik

Here it is enough to say that thereafter work on the canoe went more steadily. "

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116, 461, 476

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Woleaians
Ifalik

"The immediate rewards of group labor are ordinarily confined to sharing in the sociability of the gathering and in food distributed during the course of the work or at its close; sometimes, also, in the products of the work-- a catch of fish or a canoe-house which all the men may use. Other payment comes in roundabout ways and may be indefinitely delayed. That is, a stint of work does not entitle the worker to a specified return from a specified employer, as with us; but does give him a claim to equivalent services, whenever he needs them, from whoever is available to help. There seems to be no thought of one individual profiting more than another, or at another's expense."

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116, 646, 461

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"For a more specific picture of one of these meetings, here is the account of the last one, from my field journal:

Oct. 23. -Third public meeting today. The people had notice of it yesterday. In the morning Toromann blew the conch from the stone pier. He made two trips, seemed like an hour apart. The people were slow to come.

Toromann began with what sounded, in Tom's translation, like the usual formal beginning. Come all ye. Listen to what the chiefs have to say. 'Work good, no work bad. No steal something from 'nother man.' He spoke in five bursts, with meditative pauses between. Burst 3 was apparently a joke, but I didn't get it translated in time.

As usual, Wolpaitlk didn't talk. Maroligar, toward the end, did, but in a low conversational tone and at no considerable length. In a pause between Toromann's early efforts, Maroligar suggested something to Paliuilimar, seemed like [144] urging him to speak; but P. said nothing at that time. Toromann's last burst was to the effect that when women were working in the taro swamp, they should not take taro that did not belong to them.

Wolpetau was the second speaker. He talked about menstruating women. Said when the blood first appeared, they should go into their seclusion house and stay there, not go to the taro swamp. When the flow was finished, and not before then, was the time to go back to work.

Between bursts, he worked industriously at rope-making.

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Wolpetau's second burst was to the effect that when the chiefs tell men to go out fishing, they are to go. Then, if there is a good catch, the chiefs will see to it that fish are distributed to all the people.

Third burst: if any man doesn't want to go out with the others when the chiefs order a fishing expedition, let him speak up now.*

Then Toromann filled in, beginning with a hear, hear the words of the chief. He pointed out that if men didn't go fishing, and women didn't work in the taro swamp, there would be nothing to eat. Ifalik is too small. (Meaning, apparently, too small to support loafers.) He called on Paliuilimar to speak, but the old man did not respond until the second urging. Then he finally got going, in a low voice at first, but warming up. He told the people to heed what their chiefs said--the regular formula. Said some men didn't seem to like to work when the chiefs told them to. Very bad business that. He also told them to do whatever Mel Spiro and I told them to (but of course we're not giving orders, except to Talimeira and Uveli**of a morning.) He told them to clean up,

** Apparently a challenge to some malingerer. Mainly rhetorical; as might be expected, nobody spoke up.

** Talimeira was assigned by the chiefs to work for us; Uveli volunteered for the same service.

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against the coming of the ship.

Finally, when everything seemed about over, Wolpetau said that by and by there would be dancing. This was the promised response to my suggestion that I'd like to see some of the ur I have been getting the words to. I could not make out whether he set a definite time, but they'll come through.

Paliuilimar and Toromann wound up with short speeches. I had asked Tom to tell the chiefs that the important place to clean was around the houses, and to avoid stagnant water because of mosquitoes, rather than to do a wholesale weeding job in the interior, as they did after the last call of the ship. Pointed out that the doctor was the man interested in how clean they were. Paliuilimar said something to that effect in his final speech, but by the time it got back to me in Tom's translation it was somewhat diluted.

The element of formality makes of these meetings a ritual, not unlike the type of church service in our culture that emphasizes the sermon. In this case the meaning is not religious. Like the kava ceremonies of western Polynesia, parts of Fiji, and some eastern Micronesian islands, these meetings serve to manifest and emphasize the sentiments of rank and law and order, as exemplified by obedience to the chiefs."

"Both men and women come to the meetings supplied with work-materials, which keeps them busy during the entire meeting. The men bring their coconut sennet, to be twisted into rope; and the women bring flowers, out of which they make leis, or banana bark fibres, which they make into thread. Throughout the meeting, men and women are busily engaged in their work. The chiefs, too, bring their sennet, and continue to make their rope, even when addressing the people. Though this occurred at all the meetings, it was not until the last one that this procedure presented itself to me as a problem. If the people were very diligent and frugal with their time, one could understand this practice without difficulty. But the fact is, as we shall see, the people can, and do, sit around for an entire day, without engaging in a single productive activity. Why, then, this burst of industry at the meetings? When I queried him on this point, Tom answered that a man would be ashamed if he were to be seen just sitting at the meeting without doing anything, for it was not right to be seen doing nothing. In other words, the fact that they loaf at other times is not important, but at a public meeting no one wishes to be accused of indolence. And yet, plausible, as this interpretation might be on the surface, it is far from satisfying. Why is a man ashamed to be seen without work at a meeting, but not at any other time? Surely, just the opposite should be true. The meetings are very important, and as such, should they not hold the people's undivided attention? At this point we can only indicate the problem, but we shall take it up again when we consider the psychological correlates of Ifaluk culture."

"A factor of major importance in the use of the canoe-house for the manufacture of rope is its function as a social as well as economic center. Since the destruction of the men's club houses in the last typhoon the canoe-houses have taken over their function, so that the men now congregate in the canoe-houses as formerly they congregated in the club-houses. Now this fact is important for an understanding of Ifaluk culture. Though there is a word for work in the Ifaluk vocabulary (engan), it refers to discrete and specific forms of labor, and is not used as a generic term, as it is in our own culture, as when a man says he is 'going to work.' No one has his special work to perform each day, from which he rests at the end of the day or the end of the week. So, too, there is neither a term nor a concept corresponding to our word economics. Our conceptualization of life activities into economic, social, recreational, etc, does not hold for the Ifaluk. This means that the various kinds of work (engan) that are performed are recognised as responses to certain basic survival needs, but the concept of work as vocation or as moral career that this term has assumed in western society, at least in its Puritan and Calvinist tradition, is completely foreign to the native, and indeed would be inexplicable to them. Theoretical considerations aside, this means that a man's day is his own, to do with what he desires, and among the activities he engages in, are certain activities of economic importance. A man goes to his club-house in the morning

28: Spiro--34

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because there he will be with the other men, where he can discuss the events of the day, engage someone in a conversation, and at the same time, make rope, if he so desires. But there is nothing compulsive about his rope-making, or for that matter, about any economic activity. There is no concept of an economic obligation, 'this ought to be done', except insofar as it relates to basic biological needs, and then 'ought' has no place at all, for it is obvious that if a man wishes to eat, he must fish etc. "

"Unless there is something special the men are doing in the way of communal construction or communal fishing, their average day involves no special commitments. Usually they go to the canoe houses, where they may make rope, or may just sit around talking, (5) gossiping, and smoking (6) or perhaps take a nap. Rope making is [146] probably the activity that consumes most of a man's time. While making rope, of course, the men continue their conversations. Often, however, they just sit in the canoe-houses,

"5. The people rarely, if ever, sit on the bare ground. They always sit on a mat, and if there is none around, they will sit on a coconut husk, or any other object that happens to be about. At first I thought that sitting on the bare ground is tabooed behavior, perhaps the soil is holy. Upon inquiring I discovered the real reason is much more prosaic. The natives simply do not like the feeling of the damp ground. I must have seemed boorish to the people when I first came, because I would sit on the ground without bothering about a mat or a coconut husk.

6. [See following sheet for footnote 6.]"

28: Spiro--145-146
116, 512, 276, 461,

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"6. [Footnote p. 146] Smoking is a cooperative enterprise. When a person lights a cigarette, he invariably passes it to the person near him, after he has smoked a short time. That person, in turn, passes it on, so that it might change hands five or six times until it is consumed. When we first arrived on the island, I not only did not pass on my cigarette, but I would put out my cigarette butt, rather than pass it on. I soon noticed the questioning look on the faces of the people at this anti-social behavior. It was not till a few weeks had passed that I learned the native pattern, and conformed to it."

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Woleaians-3
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engaging in no activity at all, not even talking. This is quite strange from a western perspective, where a congregation of people always leads to conversation. The Ifalik men, however, may sit for long periods of time, just staring into space. In any event, the canoe house is the place where men spend a great deal of their waking hours. It is really, as we have already indicated, the men's club house, as well as the locale for most economic activity. That the canoe-house serves a basic social need is indicated by the fact that men never make rope at home. The twisting of rope involves no great activity nor is it messy, and could very well be done at home, either in the house or alongside it. The reason for going to the canoe-house, therefore, is entirely for the purpose of conviviality."

CHAPTER IV

**FISHING—AND
BAKALIZING**

TUESDAY morning was started by one of the chiefs blowing a series of resonant blasts, down by the lagoon shore, on a horn made from a large Triton shell. This was the signal for a general assembly. The chiefs had decided that the island needed cleaning up, and word had gone round that the start should be made today. The ground of the coconut grove along the lagoon had been littered with trash ever since the storm, particularly noticeable on the fine lawn of Japanese temple grass around the Fan Nap.

The cleaning was unhurried. The ground was swept with short brooms made from coconut leaves or from old coconut flower stalks with the branches held together by a binding of sennit cord. Much of the sweeping was done from a comfortable sitting or squatting position and the trash was gathered into neat piles to be burned later. The clean-up started at the south end of the island, the people gradually working north. At noon, when about half of the Rauau area was finished, Maroligar again sounded the trumpet and everyone knocked off for the day.

Don and I spent the morning trying to get things more organized around camp. There were Don's drums to be unpacked. He now had a typewriter and a small but very useful reference library and all sorts of goodies like specimen jars, thermometers, hydrometers for measuring salinity, and extra trousers which had been used for packing material. I promptly scrounged a pair of trousers. I had come to the

CHAPTER V

MOSTLY ABOUT FOOD

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562 • MUCH time on Ifaluk was spent in sitting—men sitting around the canoe houses, women sitting around the cook houses. I had the impression that the men were more apt to just sit, and the women to sit and chatter; but this impression was probably a carry-over from preconceived ideas about my own culture. Certainly, in fact, the men in the canoe houses often carried on interminable conversations; but certainly also they were frequently silent and contemplative—or drowsy.

643 This fitted my temperament fine. Since childhood I have been an inveterate sitter (and day dreamer). My most frequent companion in the sitting process on Ifaluk was Fagolier, the paramount chief. From the beginning he fascinated me with his poise and dignity, his character-lined face. I had a curious feeling of rapport sitting with him, sharing a mat or a coconut log, smoking, occasionally exchanging a grin, but feeling no real need of trying to say anything.

He had all of the qualities that should go with the paramount chieftainship—the assurance and humility of security; a calm, reliable decisiveness; an ever-present courtesy and thoughtfulness. I wondered often what he was really like, how much this picture of him was the product of my own imaginings, whether I saw him as he was, or whether I saw only the projection of my own concepts of a chief. Yet I gained confidence in my mental portrait because it always seemed to correspond with my observations. Then I would still wonder whether this was a tribute to Fagolier, or a tribute to the flexibility of my